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ABSTRACT

A model for a television consortium for Connecticut regional community colleges is presented. A successful consortium involves commitment to the purpose of providing access to higher education for nontraditional students, willingness of program developers and administrators to listen to and work with people having divergent viewpoints, adequate promotion and publicity throughout the consortium area, a sound system of financing the basic operational costs, selection of the proper course for particular needs, a centralized consortium office for overall program administration, and workshops for administrative and instructional personnel in proper television course procedures and operation. The general consortium should be governed by a committee made up of representatives from each of the member institutions, with the authority to make decisions which affect their institutions. Without decision-making authority, the veto power of each institution's administration could effectively destroy the consortium. The television component of the consortium should be directed by a consortium council, consortium coordinator, campus coordinators, and campus instructors, each having specific responsibilities. Financial considerations, possible funding methods and alternatives, course leasing methods, the cable television option and possible broadcaster services, are discussed. (TR)

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PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: DEVELOPING COLLEGE TELEVISION CONSORTIA

THE STATE CONSORTIA MODEL

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STATE-WIDE CONSORTIA MODEL

CONNECTICUT REGIONAL COMMUNITY COLLEGES

FORMING A TELEVISION CONSORTIUM: THE PROBLEMS OF BEGINNING

The bringing together of various institutions, both public and private, for the purpose of forming a television consortium is not an easy task. It brings together people and institutions representing often divergent philosophies and a wide disparity in institutional commitment. It takes firm resolve and dedicated leadership to weld the group together for the common purpose. Success is only attained by careful diplomacy and persistence on the part of all concerned. Adequate financing, promotion and a feasible system of administration are essential to a smooth-running operation.

Let's look first at commitment--the resolve at all levels of administration, from the president on down through the administration to staff levels. You must have total institutional commitment to the concept of televised instruction in order to achieve success. This means that the deans, department heads, registrars and instructors are all behind the idea and are willing to cooperate. To begin or operate with less can result in problems later in the program. With this commitment, each representative on the consortium committee can function more freely, and the committee as a whole can operate in an atmosphere of cohesiveness.

The Necessary Ingredients for a Successful Consortium

I. Commitment of purpose: To provide access to higher education for the non-traditional student.

   A. Commitment of institutional resources.

      1. financial
      2. personnel

   B. Commitment to experiment with new delivery methods.

      1. broadcast instructional television
      2. on-campus instructional television

II. Diplomacy: A willingness to listen to and work with people of divergent viewpoints.

   A. A willingness to persuade those on your staff that broadcast television courses are worthwhile and do not pose a threat to on-campus faculty.

III. Adequate promotion and publicity throughout the consortium area.

   A. Consistent campaigns in all area mass media.
   B. Letters to target groups.
   C. Brochures to businesses, industries and libraries.
   D. On-campus promotion.
   E. Posters in public places, organizations and shopping malls.
   F. Direct mail to select population areas.
   G. Press releases to corporation and company house organs.

IV. A sound system of financing the basic costs of operation.

A. Sufficient funding to develop concept.
B. Exploration of outside funding possibilities such as FIPSE or Title XX.

V. The selection of the proper course for your particular needs.

A. Highly specialized vs. broader appealing course.
B. Consortium needs assessment.

VI. A centralized consortium office for administering the overall program: advertising, printing, research and course acquisition.

VII. Workshops for administrative and instructional personnel in the proper procedures and operation of a television course.

A. Needs of the off-campus student.
B. Mail registrations.
C. Minimal student contact.
D. Off-campus centers.

Makeup of the Consortium Committee

This committee is made up of representatives from each one of the constituent units, public or private, with the authority to make decisions which affect their institution. These members can be from the teaching staff, deans or the administration. It is beneficial to have this cross section of the college community for the purpose of receiving input from all levels, especially when course selection is being considered.

The committee must have decision-making power granted to them by each member institution. Otherwise, the veto power of each administration could effectively destroy the consortium. The committee must be able to make decisions on matters of course selection, course credits, number of seminars, course costs, administrative procedures and instructor work loads. In dealing with a mixed consortium, public and private, remuneration rates might better be handled by the individual institution, since their pay rates may vary widely.

Expertise may be provided to the committee via various sub-committees from the academic and administrative areas. For instance, a curriculum committee may provide valuable input to the committee in the selection of academically sound courses. However, this input does not have to be binding on the committee. They are solely responsible for the final decision on course selection.

The committee should meet on a regular basis to insure continued interest and support on the part of each member.

CENTRALIZED TELEVISION CONSORTIUM STRUCTURE

TV Consortium Council

(One representative from each institution.)

Responsible for:

- Setting policy
- Course selection
- Recommending course fee rate
- Establishing operational procedures
- Setting course credit rate

Consortium TV Coordinator

Responsible for:

- Administering overall television program
- Liaison with TV Consortium Council
- Coordinating program with each campus
- Layout and printing of recruiting brochures, posters, and course syllabi
- Planning and placing state-wide advertising
- Conducting research with students and instructors
- Writing and distributing promotional materials
- Researching available television courses
- Setting up Consortium Screening Sessions
- Liaison with the Public Television Station
- Providing Council with operational reports

Campus TV Coordinator

Responsible for:

- Coordinating program on local campus
- Coordinating book ordering with campus bookstore
- Working with Admissions-Registrar and Public Relations offices
- Facilitating communications from Central Coordinator to instructors
- Coordinating off-air recording of television segments for students who miss telecast

Campus TV Instructor

Responsible for:

- Familiarizing themselves with course content
- Conducting student orientation
- Holding course seminars
- Administering midterm and final examinations
- Being available for student consultation on-campus
- Viewing telecasts
- Sending out student newsletters
- Administering research questionnaires

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The success or failure of a consortium might well depend upon the method and stability of the financing. Whether cooperating colleges are public or private, state supported or grant supported, has a direct bearing on the method used to underwrite the television project.

State supported systems are able to function in either the general fund or the extension fund. The most stable method of financing television learning is through the general fund--the money allotted by the state legislature for the operation of the institution. Programs and services financed through the extension fund, a self-supporting means of financing instruction or services outside of the general fund, are somewhat tenuous. They must return moneys spent through student fees or other charges. Therefore, the soundest method of financing your telecourse is through the general fund.

To alleviate some of the financial burden of a fledgling consortium, perhaps the local campuses offering the telecourses could share an instructor. This could be considered for several reasons: there is limited student-teacher contact in a telecourse; less than fifty percent of the students attend on-campus seminars; and the instructor needs less class preparation time for a telecourse. Courses with hand-in written assignments could be handled by a para-professional.

Each campus must have an on-campus telecourse coordinator who will coordinate the course with the instructor, bookstore and involved academic departments. This person could be the current Continuing Education Director or Community Services Director. Both of these departments are often involved in telecourse programs. Since they are already on board, they may be able to handle the courses without any additional administrative costs. They could initiate on and off-campus local promotion and provide local contacts for community involvement in the courses.

POSSIBLE FUNDING METHODS

GENERAL FUND

All expenses to be included in system or college budget:

- Instruction
- Advertising
- Printing
- Courses
- Personnel
- Postage
- Shipping

Advantages:

Lower cost to students.
Operational funding is guaranteed.
Allows colleges to offer courses with lower enrollments.

Disadvantages:

Must be supported by enrollment to justify funds.

EXTENSION FUND

All expenses outside of the regular budget.
Self-supporting: what is paid out must be recouped in fees.
Zero-based budgeting at work.

Advantages:

Can offer courses even though General Fund money not available.
A successful television course can bring in additional revenue for other community services.

Disadvantages:

Higher cost to student.
Income from enrollment must meet expenses.
A loss reduces other services.
Higher cost might reduce enrollment, with less incentive to enroll.

FUNDING ALTERNATIVES

1. Each college contributes a percentage of the basic leasing cost of the course to the centralized coordinating office.

   Example: The basic lease charge of $3500 divided by the five colleges in the consortium.

   $$5 \overline{)\$3500}\ \$\ 700 \text{ per college}$$

2. A standard $10 per student surcharge is added to the overall cost of the program. Each college would be assessed according to its enrollment. The coordinating office would sign the lease contract and pay the lease plus surcharges bill, or the colleges could be invoiced for the surcharge individually by the leasing organization.

3. All advertising and printing could be done by each college in the consortium, or portions could be centralized with total costs divided by the total enrollment. This would produce a cost-per-student charge which would be added to the portion of the lease fee billed to each college.

   Please note that this is perhaps the most equitable way of dividing the costs, but it does have drawbacks. For example, because the student surcharge assessment rises and falls according to the enrollment, a college will not know prior to enrollment exactly what it is going to cost them to run the program. It encourages all colleges to promote the television course and produce high enrollments to cover expenses.

COURSE LEASING METHODS

Basic lease charge, plus surcharge after the first one hundred students.
(Lease fee usually $2500 to $3500 plus $10 per student after first 100.)

Basic lease charge plus surcharge for all students enrolled.
Same as the above cost without the incentive of the first 100 free.

No basic rate but a higher surcharge for the first 100 students, normally $15 to $25, plus a $10 surcharge for every student over 100.
This could work out to be the least expensive with low numbers.

A flat rate based upon the number of transmitters used in the consortium area. No surcharge.
This system is used by a large television library. Many factors are used to arrive at a final bill for using one of their courses. Total hours of programming used over the period of a year; the power of the transmitters and whether the courses are recorded onto their tape or yours. Although it is cheaper to lease a course on your own tape--raw blank tapes are purchased and sent to the course producer for the dubbing of the course--it may not be financially possible when first starting.

There is no standard system of charging for telecourses at this time, although the surcharge system is more prevalent than any other, and may become the standard for the industry. Check each producer's costing system and project your costs based upon estimated enrollment.

Why the Surcharge?

Today most telecourse producers invest large sums of money in the production of their telecourses and accompanying materials. Budgets in excess of one million dollars are not uncommon and are growing every year. These rapidly escalating high costs cannot be recouped by the producer through the basic course charge. Therefore, to make the lease cost more equitable between the producer and the college or consortium leasing the course, the surcharge is assessed to each enrollee. This system lowers the initial cost of the course to the small college or consortium, allowing the producer to participate in the successful enrollment of the larger colleges and consortia. A maximum surcharge figure may be established by the producer for larger consortia where there are thousands of students enrolled each semester.

The Right Course for You

Choosing the right course for your particular needs is very important to your success. Just any course won't do. Before you make a decision, survey your on-campus courses. Which ones have the highest enrollment? Are there any courses where the students are being turned away because of lack of space? Has anyone expressed the need for introductory courses in psychology or sociology? These answers will help to narrow your choice.

In arriving at your decision, please remember not to choose a highly specialized course dealing with a subject like, "The Quantum Theorem." The more specialized your subject matter, the more narrow your potential student population. For an initial telecourse keep it general like, "An Introduction to Psychology or Sociology." Choose a basic course taken by many college freshmen or sophomores. There are many courses available in this category of very high quality.

To aid you in your selection process, it is well to establish a consortium screening committee to view possible courses. In this way, you can receive input from discipline specialists, as to the quality of the course and the potential of its offering. Upon request, producers will supply you with videocassettes of their courses for screening purposes.

CABLE TELEVISION OPTION

Most people think of television courses in terms of broadcast television only. There is an alternative which is both inexpensive and flexible: cable television.

Over the last five years, the cable television industry has been in a state of limbo with development money very tight and a growth rate almost at a standstill. Today, with a brighter financial picture, cable television is expanding.

Take a look at this communications system, and learn how it might be used to serve more students, either as a total delivery system or in conjunction with your broadcast schedule, providing alternative prime time viewing options.

How it Works

Cable, to put it in simple terms, is a system of receiving signals, both near and distant, on a tall master antenna tower, boosting them and distributing them over a network of cable to the homes and buildings in the franchise area. Each cable subscriber pays a monthly charge to be tied into the system.

Cable systems are primarily twenty-channel or forty-channel systems, with from one to three channels dedicated to education, government and community access. Because of the lack of local use of these channels, many cable companies have combined all three into one.

The cable companies are supposed to provide equipment for use of these local channels by outside colleges and local groups. The standard format for playing locally recorded programs on these cable systems is the 3/4 inch videocassette. This is inexpensive, reliable and produces good quality color.

Most videotaped television courses can be leased on 3/4 inch format or can be dubbed down from the two inch broadcast format if requested. If you are considering offering television courses to your community, but cannot afford a broadcast contract, or would like to augment your planned broadcast course, consider cable.

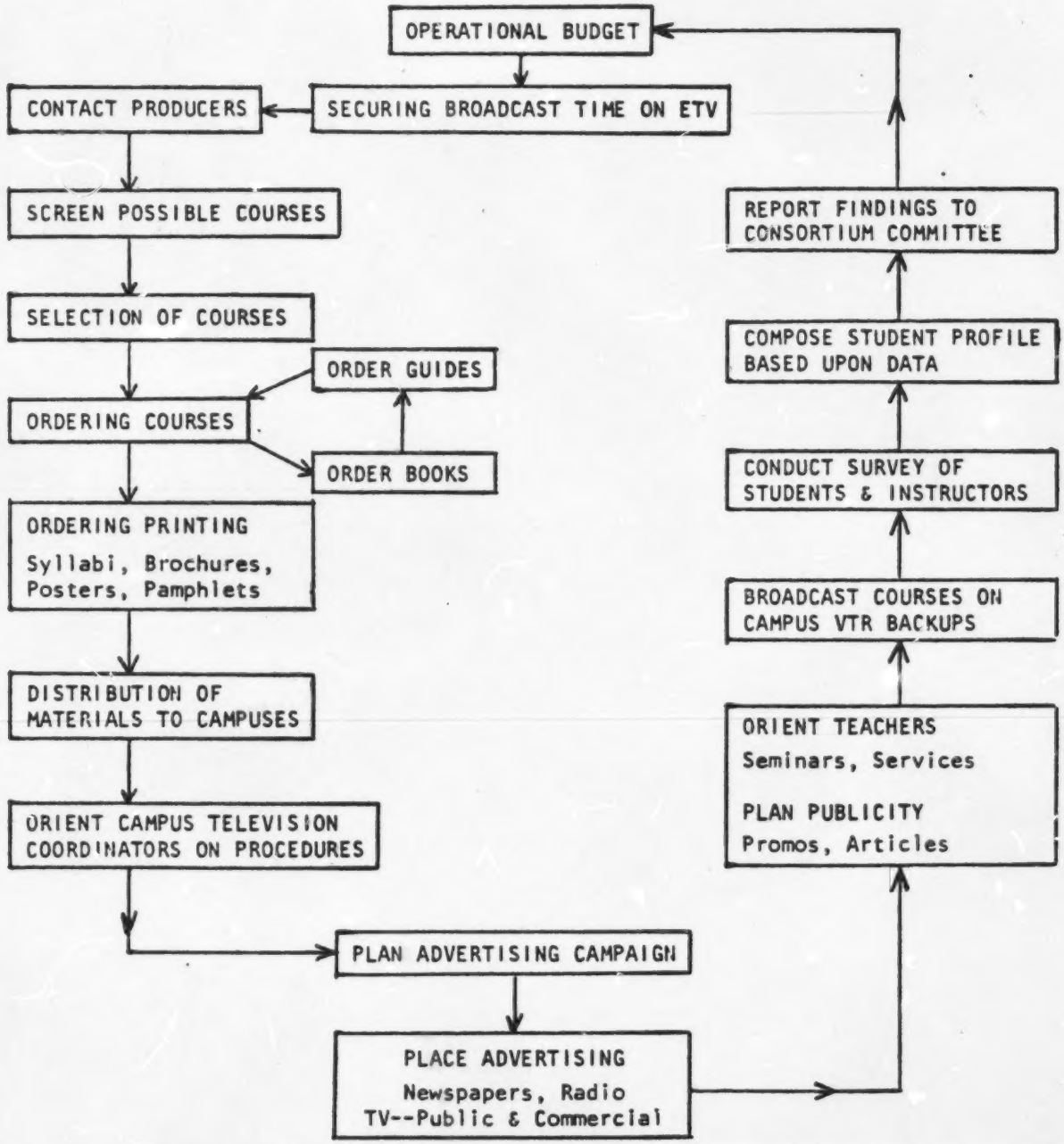
Advantages of Using Cable

1. Less expensive to originate (3/4 inch vs. two inch broadcast tape).
2. Flexibility of playback schedule--any time of day.
3. Student is able to view programs many times.
4. Possible to add locally-produced material before or after leased course.

Disadvantages of Using Cable

1. Does not cover the same area as broadcast television. The franchise area vs. the entire state or region.
2. If using more than one cable system to distribute courses, problem of getting tapes to cable companies.
3. Limited playback equipment available at cable companies.

TELECOURSE OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES FLOWCHART



YOUR BROADCASTING PARTNER

One of the most important elements in the successful offering of a telecourse is the close cooperation with your public television station. They can provide you with an invaluable amount of advice and service in getting started.

To begin with, you must have air time to broadcast your course. This must be assured before you make any commitment to a producer or course library. The public broadcaster is not always ready to provide time, either, because he has other community demands for this time, or other commitments which preclude cooperation. Broadcasting schedules are usually locked-up six months to a year in advance, so it pays to plan far in advance.

Keep in mind that the time you are seeking may not be free for the asking. Some broadcasters may have to charge for their time because of their financial structures. This may vary according to time of day, the day of the week, and the number of stations involved.

Once you have settled the issue of time, there are other services that can be offered by the broadcaster that could be of benefit to you in getting started. The following list will give you some idea as to the types of services he could perform:

1. Provide location for centralized consortium screening of courses
2. Handle and ship videotapes to and from the producers or libraries
3. Provide on-air promotion for your course and promotional tapes for other stations
4. Make cassette dubs for use on cable or campus
5. Provide advance information about up-coming PBS series that might be offered for credit
6. Provide publicity in the station viewer guide and invite Television Coordinator to guest programs to promote courses

These and other services are most valuable in maintaining smooth, efficient telecourse operations. You must also understand that you are working in an electronic medium and with the element of human failure. There will be times when the wrong program may be aired, or because of storms of freak weather conditions, a program may not be aired at all. Be prepared to bear with the broadcaster's problems, and discuss alternate arrangements when problems do occur. The key is understanding and creating a positive atmosphere for cooperation.

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CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
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